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A Letter on the Subject of Prayer - 1855

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A LETTER

ADDRESSED

TO THE MEMBERS

OF THE

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

CHIEFLY ON THE

SUBJECT OF PRAYER.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."—Col. iv. 2.

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FROM THE

ANDREW PRESTON FLABODY

FUND

February 3, 1942

A LETTER, &c.

DEAR FRIENDS,

FEELING something more than an inclination to lay a few of my thoughts before some of the members of our religious society at the present time, chiefly on the subject of PRAYER, I yield to the impression under a desire, that neither the weakness of the instrument, nor the inadequate manner in which he may express himself, may prove a reason in the mind of the reader, for slighting the testimony I am about to bear.

Let us, in the first place, commemorate with feelings of thanksgiving the goodness of a longsuffering and gracious God. I believe there are not a few within the borders of our religious society, who are prepared to join me in such an acknowledgment. I mean those who are deeply sensible that they have deserved only evil at the Lord's hand ; yet has he rewarded them with good : whose many acts of disobedience have laid them open to his severe chastisements ; yet has he laid his hand on them with gentleness, as a father who pitith his children and remembers they are dust.^a Indeed, may not this whole people wonder at the gracious dealings of the Lord towards them, in that, notwithstanding the degree in which they have departed from his counsel, and been unfaithful in his covenant, he is still preserving them as a distinct community ; still calling to them by his messengers to return unto him ; still visiting them by the inshining of his light in their consciences, and making many of them sensible, that they are not the people he designed them to be ? Well then, let us bless his holy name thus far, " and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation,"^b seeing that his designs towards us are still good and gracious. But let us also bear in mind, that *He who is declared to be " the same yesterday, to-*

^a See Ps. ciii. 13, 14.

^b 2 Pet. iii. 15.

day, and for ever,"^a is "without variableness or shadow of turning."^b We have therefore no reason to suppose, that he will ever alter "one jot or one tittle" of the terms of his covenant. He still requires "truth in the inward parts;"^c and as, by the inshining of His light there, the truth becomes manifested to any individual, regarding his duty, he requires and ever will demand obedience. Were not these the terms of his covenant with his chosen people in all ages, and under every dispensation? and will he require less of us? Although the faith of the Lord's children may be variously exercised, "the obedience of faith"^d is that which has at all times procured their acceptance with Him. And it is by faith that we must be justified as well as they.

Bearing these sentiments in mind, I will now proceed towards the subject, on which I had it more particularly in view, to offer a few observations. There is not one amongst us arrived at the years of understanding, enjoying our privileges, but who knows, or ought to know and to feel, that he is a dependent and an accountable being. And, as the Lord our God has given us a being and a place on his earth, so will he be sought unto, in acknowledgment of this his power and goodness. It may be said with much truth, that nature itself teaches us this lesson; and it is the condemnation of our species, that man is not naturally disposed thus to confess his allegiance to the King of kings. But what shall be said of a people, before whom "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ" has been so evidently set forth, as it has been amongst us, by the preaching of the word, and by the Holy Scriptures themselves, if they are not found in the practical acknowledgment of "the truth as it is in Jesus?"

Perhaps some may take exception at the prominent manner in which "the preaching of the word" is introduced into the foregoing paragraph; because it must be acknowledged, that a large proportion of our meetings for worship are held in silence. Others, I am aware, may, and perhaps will, be inclined to attribute the frequently alleged want of efficacy in our ministry, to that peculiar line of doctrine which our ministers have mostly

^a Heb. xiii. 8. ^b Jam. i. 17. ^c Ps. vi. 6. ^d Rom. xvi. 23.
Acts vi. 7. ^e Ephes. iv. 21.

been led to adopt in their communications. But my own apprehension is, that neither of these objections are just, nor if they were, would they avail in attempting to account for the state of our society in the present day. No doubt that many are weak and sickly amongst us, and many sleep; [“] and a variety of causes might be assigned for the prevalence of such a state. Perhaps many palliating circumstances might have been advanced on behalf of a highly favoured people formerly, of whom it was said, “They have Moses and the prophets,” &c., but “if they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” [“] When the love of the world and the things of the world has taken possession of the mind, and the whole man is engrossed in the pursuit or in the enjoyment of its honours, its gratifications, its treasures, or even of the needful provision for the body, an evil heart of unbelief has entered, and the living God is departed from. [‘] There is then no longer a seeking “first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness,” [“] nor can there be much, if any serious or availing thoughtfulness on the subject. On the contrary, the language of such a heart too generally is, “Soul, take thine ease.” [“] If the witness for God in the conscience does for a moment arouse such a one from his sleep of spiritual death, he is ever ready either to defer the matter to a more convenient season, or to cast the responsibility of his condition any where, rather than where it ought to rest, namely, on himself; and the minister, or the ministry, or some apprehended flaw in the principles of truth must bear that blame, which in reality belongs to “the carnal mind,” which “is enmity against God.” [“] It may be asserted as a truth resting upon every day experience, that the earthly-minded man is seldom disposed to believe, where his faith necessarily involves the sacrifice of a beloved object. Here then is the secret of the matter. “Light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” “But he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” [“]

It is indeed not without reason, that we have to lament

[“] *1 Cor. xi. 30.* [“] *Luke xvi. 29, 31.* [“] *Heb. iii. 12.* [“] *Matt. vi.*
[“] *Luke xii. 19.* [“] *Rom. viii. 6, 7.* [“] *John iii. 19, 21.*

over the feeble state of things amongst us. Let us then with David be willing to enquire, “Is there not a cause?” “Why does the enemy triumph over us?” “Why go we mourning all the day long, because of the oppression of the enemy?” In the early periods of our society the case was not thus. Is there not a cause?

That sincerity of mind, that perfect dedication of heart, that earnest following after righteousness, which was so conspicuous in the character of our early Friends, cannot be too frequently contemplated. It may be truly said of them that they loved and bought the truth, that it was to them the “pearl of great price,” and that they parted with all that was naturally dear to them to secure its possession. Holding it by such a tenure, and thus proving its worth, they not only rejoiced in it themselves, but they were also made sensible, that the welfare of the human family at large was deeply involved in it; and they desired its prosperity more than the increase of corn, wine, or oil. Moving under the influence of such a faith, they were valiant in support of the principles of truth; even as the apostles and early Christians were valiant in their day; and were not less given up meekly to suffer for it. But then they were diligent in cultivating the root; their faith was exercised in “the power of God,” for the gospel came to our early Friends also, “not in word only, but in power.”^a This they waited to feel, each one in his own vessel; to this they were concerned to submit in its smallest requirings; and, as obedience kept pace with its manifestations of duty, they experienced increase of strength. Their faith became their victory, according to the language of the apostle John, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”^b For they had to pass through a host of enemies, yet they lost not their confidence in that arm of Divine power which was held out for their support. While they continued under the shadow of “the Rock,” “their strength,” no weapon that was formed against them could in any wise prosper; and their histories prove how often they were enabled, in a measure of the same power, to condemn every tongue that rose up in judgment against them.^c

^a 1 Thess. i. 5.

^b 1 John v. 4.

^c Isa. viii. 17.

Let us also remember, that while those of whom we are speaking were a zealous and a sincere, they were also a watchful and a praying people. Conformably with the example of David and other holy men, they were earnest in the daily practice of retirement and waiting upon God. The faith that was in them was “unfeigned;” and having this faith, they exercised it according to the apostle’s doctrine, “praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”^a In this acceptable state of mind they found near access to the Throne of Grace. Prayer, or a state of watchfulness unto prayer, was to them the medium through which they received their daily bread, that spiritual food, the “hidden manna,”^b by which alone our immortal souls can be nourished up unto eternal life. If we had “the same spirit of faith”^c with them, and exercised it as they did, we should doubtless prove it to be the same source of life and strength to us, that they found it to be. We should then know, not as individuals only, but as a body, what it is to experience a “growth in the truth amongst us;” for we should be in the way of “growing in grace,” and we should increase with “the increase of God.”^d

Very early after my own mind was drawn towards a religious life, receiving the truth, as I trust I did, in some measure, “in the love of it,” the query often presented, “What is a Christian without prayer?” And perhaps the best answer may be furnished, by referring to the present state of many in our highly professing, and once more highly favoured society. “*Ye have not, because ye ask not.*” This is no new language in which to address a Christian church. Indeed, we have no encouragement given to us, throughout the Holy Scriptures, that I am aware of, to look for any special favour from above, unless our desires are sufficiently lively and strong to lead us into the act of waiting, of seeking, or of asking for it. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;”^e said our blessed Saviour to his disciples. And again, “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”^f And although the

^a *Ephes.* vi. 18. ^b *Rev.* ii. 17. ^c *2 Cor.* iv. 13. ^d *Col.* ii. 19.
^e *Jam.* iv. 2. ^f *Luke* xi. 9. ^g *John* xvi. 24.

views of our society, on the subject of prayer, are somewhat peculiar, and differ from those of most other Christian churches, more particularly in regard to that necessary preparation of heart for making acceptable offerings, whether of prayer, thanksgiving, or praise, either in public or in private, and may possibly have operated on some minds as a hindrance to their entering upon the exercise,—I am bold to assert for the encouragement of such, that it was never the intention of George Fox, or of any of our early Friends, either by word or writing, in the least degree, to close up the door of access to “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,”^a which had been set so widely open by Him “who openeth and no man shutteth,”^b and which, with thanksgiving and praise be it spoken, will remain open as long as He pleases, who “shutteth and no man openeth.”^c

It was manifestly the purpose of our Lord and Saviour, in all that He accomplished for the salvation of mankind, to break down and to remove out of the way on one hand, whatever had a tendency to bar our approaches unto God; and on the other, to lift up and to strengthen the timid and feeble faith of the sinner, and to encourage him to “come boldly to the Throne of Grace.”^d When he taught his disciples how to pray, he did not preface his instructions with a fearful description of the Divine attributes, nor of the glory of the Divine majesty; on the contrary, by familiar illustrations of an endearing or pathetic character,^e he sought to impress on the minds of his hearers, and on our minds, that it was a part of the dispensation of grace, for the Father himself to draw near, and in mysterious condescension to his fallen and otherwise lost creatures, to lay aside his own glory, excepting so far as it shone “in the face of Jesus Christ,”^f thus manifesting himself in the flesh for a season. And although the time is long past, in which Christ was to be known after the flesh, yet his “grace and truth”^g still remain. God has sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts,^h by which, through his perpetual intercession, we have, may I use the term, familiar access to the Father.

But the Scripture itself intimates the possibility of our

* 2 Cor. i. 3. ^b Rev. iii. 7. ^c Heb. iv. 16. Luke xi. 11;
and xviii. 1—8. ^d 2 Cor. iv. 6. ^e John i. 17. ^f Gal. iv. 6.

asking amiss in prayer ;^a yet, on the other hand, it assures us, that “ if we ask any thing according to the will of God he heareth us.”^b Therefore, if at any time one should feel his inability to pray,—which is indeed a frequent experience of the Christian, and, therefore, no necessary cause for discouragement,—thou who art in such a case, be not hasty^c in thy spirit to utter words before the Lord, as thinking thou shalt be heard for thy speaking more or less ; but wait on the Lord in all lowness and subjection of spirit before him, until he incline unto thee, so that all thy petitions may be in subjection to his will, after the example of our Lord and Saviour. And as we are engaged in this way, to acknowledge that we know not how to pray, nor what to pray for, we shall from season to season find the Scripture verified in our experience,—perhaps at unexpected moments,—that “ the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities :”^d and let us ever bear in mind the succeeding consolatory assurance, that “ He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.”^e Thus, whether our prayers be silent or vocal, they will be equally accepted by Him who “ heareth the desires of the humble ;”^f we shall often rise from the exercise with our minds cheered and comforted, our faith renewed, and our confidence strengthened in the condescending goodness of our heavenly Father, even though little may have been felt that could correctly bear the name of prayer. If, therefore, any amongst us have been discouraged, either through weakness of faith or personal diffidence, from making their “ requests known unto God by prayer and supplication,”^g I fervently desire that such discouragement may be removed. Those among us, if such there be, who, through mistaken views of our principles in regard to this holy privilege, have been directly or indirectly prevented from its free exercise, in the free spirit of the gospel, let them again examine our writings on this subject, in connexion with the practice of our early members. If, in doing so, they have especial reference to the Holy Scriptures, and bear in

^a Jam. iv. 3. ^b 1 John v. 14. ^c Eccl. v. 1, 2. ^d Rom. viii. 26.

^e Ibid. 27. ^f Ps. x. 17. ^g Phil. iv. 6.

mind, at the same time, the circumstances and history of the times in which George Fox and his companions lived and preached, I cannot doubt, that they will arrive at the conclusion, that our testimony in this respect was a very seasonable check to the prevailing errors of those times; and one no less called for at the present day.

But while I am by no means prepared to assert, that even forms of prayer can never be used with acceptance, yet we, as a religious society, believe them to be both unscriptural and unnecessary; and I apprehend our doctrine is sound which says, that it is only in and by the Spirit that we can ever pray aright. “Thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.”^a It is this holy influence that softens and prepares the heart, and inclines the creature in humility and abasedness of soul, to approach the Throne of Grace in the solemn act of supplication. But as we rightly consider, that all mere formality in our acts of devotion must for ever be offensive in the Divine sight, because our heavenly Father does require sincerity and truth in all that approach him,—so, on the other hand, we believe that silent aspirations are no less acceptable than prayers clothed in words, and do equally ascend before him as incense.

With regard to our religious meetings, great indeed, to the body at large, would be the benefit resulting from that holy, watchful state of mind in individuals, of which I have been speaking. If, in our coming together, through its diligent cultivation, we were, as recorded of the early believers, “of one heart and of one soul,”^b “striving together for the faith of the gospel,”^c we should look up with more confidence than many of us are at present able to do, for the fulfilment of that gracious promise left us by Christ himself, in the language so often revived in our hearing, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.”^d Oh, how should we then be favoured to know Him to be among us “in the breaking of bread!”^e This was abundantly the privilege and the glory of our early predecessors;—and what letteth, Friends, that it should not be ours in an equal degree?

^a Ps. x. 17. ^b Acts iv. 32. See Jer. xxxii. 39, and Rom. xv. 5.

^c Phil. i. 27. ^d Matt. xviii. 20. ^e Luke xxiv. 35.

Is the Lord no longer a rewarder of those who diligently seek him?^a Is his ear no longer open to the crying of the poor, and the sighing of the needy soul?^b Is he “unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love,”^c in whatsoever we are faithful to in his covenant? Surely, no. There are not a few of us who can speak well of his name even at this day, who, notwithstanding that indifference of mind manifested in our religious meetings, often find them to be to us seasons of instruction, of profit, and of consolation. But if any of us are so unwise as to suppose that flesh and blood, that an earthly heart can savour “the things that be of God,”^d the day will come when such will discover their mistake. If we take with us to our solemn assemblies, an every day mind, and that perchance one bent wholly upon the pursuit of earthly things,—how can we hope that the Lord will have respect to us, or to our offering?^e Such as these, too often looking for words, are in danger of feeling contempt for the Lord’s table, at which others silently feed and are refreshed; and, not unlike some in apostolic times, would “heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears,”^f while the simplicity and the obedience of faith is far from them. To such I am ready to bear this testimony,—that those who go to our meetings in an unbelieving mind, and slight or undervalue a state of solemn silence and waiting, even that subjection of soul before the Lord, in which the earthen vessel must be in order to receive the heavenly treasure, and in which alone the gift of the ministry is both received and exercised, are not in a state of mind likely to profit by the ministry of the word. It is the hungry,—those who are prepared to receive with thankfulness “the crumbs which fall from their Master’s table,”^g that he feeds with good things; but the rich, and the full, and the wise in their own conceits, he sends empty away. And, for one, I have no expectation of a livelier state of things in our religious meetings, or of a more extensive dispensation of spiritual gifts amongst us, but in proportion as silent waiting before the Lord is more in repute, and becomes more generally and more diligently prac-

^a Heb. xi. 6.

^b Gen. iv. 4, 5.

^b Ps. xii. 5.

^f 2 Tim. iv. 3.

^c Heb. vi. 10.

^f Matt. xv. 27.

^d Matt. xvi. 23.

tised. This has long been my impression. There must be a breaking up of the fallow ground ; for what wise husbandman would cast in his seed among thorns?^a When there shall be a people prepared of the Lord,^b such as have submitted to the Lord's preparing hand, then do I believe it will be manifest, that there is no backwardness on the Lord's part to answer the desires of those who wait for him. Let us, then, come back to first principles ; let us receive the testimony of those who have gone before us, with simplicity of mind ; and let us endeavour to profit by their example, as set forth in the records which are left for our instruction respecting them.

Now, if our petitions are offered up in submission to the Divine will, they will be conceived in that Spirit which, as it is abode in, leads into the obedience of the Son, into the obedience of faith, the only acceptable obedience ; in which those who are “ justified by faith”^c are found walking. It was this, to which the attention of our early predecessors was so exclusively directed, when they pressed upon their hearers the necessity of obedience to the light, grace, and truth, in the secret of the heart. If we are led to pray for the Holy Spirit, it must not be with reference to his single office of Comforter, but as a “ refiner's fire,”^d a reprobate and a convincer of sin,^e and as that teacher which is to lead us into all truth by the way of the cross. If we ask for an increase of faith, we must bear in mind that the faith of the gospel, the mystery of which is held in a pure conscience, must be exercised in obedience to “ truth in the inward parts.” And if we lack wisdom, heavenly wisdom, we may be, and are encouraged, to “ ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.”^f But we must ask in faith, that same faith in which Abraham walked, and which leadeth those who are rich in it, “ in the paths of righteousness ” for the Lord's name's sake. So that all our petitions being in the will of God, and in the faith of Jesus, will tend to the glory of God through our obedience. So again, if we ask for grace, we pray for that which, when received, brings salvation with it ; but then it “ teaches to deny ungodliness and the world's

^a Jer. iv. 3.

^b Luke i. 17.

^c Rom. v. 1 ; James ii. 22.

^d Mal. iii. 2.

^e John xvi. 8.

^f James i. 5.

lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

This is the doctrine our early Friends preached—this is the testimony they had to bear. And is not Truth the very foundation-stone on which this doctrine and this testimony are built? Shall we pray for the Spirit that “leads into all truth,” and yet not obey its dictates, as it manifests the truth, regarding our duty in the inward parts? Shall we pray for an increase of faith, and yet not be obedient to the faith we already have? Shall we pray for the “wisdom that is profitable to direct,”⁴ and yet not submit to its heavenly directions? Shall we pray for the grace which teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and yet continue in a conformity to the world and its spirit, and live in the gratification of the lusts? Not but that there is often a long and hard contest between flesh and spirit, light and darkness, during which it is no easy matter so to walk as to please God; yet it should never be forgotten that “such as every man sows, such shall he also reap: if he sow unto his flesh, he shall of the flesh reap corruption; but if he sow unto the Spirit, he shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”⁵ Our predecessors, rightly estimating this truth, and deeply feeling its importance, were careful to sow to the Spirit, by obedience to the light, as the corrupt nature in them became manifested thereby. They profited by the Scripture which says, “Whatsoever doth make manifest is light;”⁶ and after the example of Abraham and the faithful in all ages, they came out of the land of their natural kindred, they were made willing to cast off the first nature, which is earthly, that they might inherit a better country and a heavenly nature. They were made willing, walking in “the obedience of faith,” to part with one beloved after another, until the “little leaven” so prevailed as that the whole was leavened.

Thus submitting to the power of the cross in themselves, they were made “vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use;”⁷ and became instru-

⁴ Tit. ii. 11, 13. ⁵ Eccl. x. 10. ⁶ Gal. vi. 7, 8. ⁷ Eph. v. 13.

⁸ 2 Tim. ii. 21.

mental in His hand to the carrying on the work of righteousness and peace in the earth. These having "finished their course and kept the faith" ^a "through much tribulation," were gathered to the just of all generations. But it has been charged upon them, and is often asserted at the present day, that many of them made little or no mention of faith in "the blood of sprinkling;" that in their testimonies they adhered so exclusively to the inward work of religion, as too much to lose sight of what Christ accomplished for us "in the body of his flesh through death," by which those who believe and "continue in the faith grounded and settled, and are not removed away from the hope of the gospel," are presented "holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable, in (God's) sight."^b Now, if this were a charge that could be substantiated against those whom we are succeeding in religious fellowship, it would go far in proving them to be unsound in the faith; because they would herein be laying aside the very ground-work of our hopes. But so far from this being the fact, their writings abundantly testify how clear and sound they were on the subject of the atonement; while it was their peculiar call, their place in the church, their line of service, to set forth "God's salvation to the ends of the earth," in a point of view which had been almost wholly lost sight of among professing Christians. It is manifest throughout their writings, beginning at George Fox, who was the chief instrument of gathering a church under our name, that Christ, "the heavenly man," ^c was the foundation-stone on which they built. Certainly, the testimony which they bore to the efficacy of the gospel dispensation in the work of conviction, conversion, and regeneration, far beyond any other class of religious professors, proved how fully, how unreservedly, they "built on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."^d

The way in which our predecessors in profession read the Holy Scriptures, led them to the conclusion that the Christian dispensation, which is indeed the climax of all

^a 2 Tim. iv. 7. ^b Col. i. 22, 23. ^c Fox's Journal and Works throughout. ^d Eph. ii. 20.

previous dispensations of Divine regard to mankind, was intended as one of full and perfect deliverance, from both the guilt and the power of sin. They had to controvert an opinion, still too prevalent, namely, the impossibility of freedom from sin this side the grave. This opinion, to which the professors of those days were zealously attached, pleading for "sin term of life," (to use an expression common in our early writers,) was a great cause of their sitting so loose to the work of Divine grace in the heart, to the necessity of which George Fox, and those associated with him, bore such ample and consistent testimony. Their opponents trusted to their construction of the apostle's doctrine of justification by faith, "without taking enough into their consideration the nature of that faith," by which alone justification is effected. Friends, on the other hand, in their writings and ministry, dwelt most, on the necessity of experiencing the work of sanctification in order to our witnessing a being justified. Had those who opposed Friends been sufficiently acquainted in their own experience, with the nature and virtue of justifying faith, its power, how it works, how it is made perfect, and what its fruits are, and how these fruits are inseparable from it, they could never have taken the stand they did against our principles on the point. In fact, the faith of our early Friends did, in an exemplary manner, embrace the whole scope of the Gospel; and the way in which they asserted the necessity of the inward work of sanctification, through submission to the light, the grace, "the spirit of holiness," in themselves, was, to my apprehension, a full and effectual acknowledgement of all the facts of the outward history. So to believe as to have the witness in ourselves, is the very work of God; it is his testimony in our hearts that we are of him. And although it is charged on our predecessors, as a grave omission in them, to have urged so little the facts of the outward history, yet as this was not at that time the disputed point, it was not so necessary for them to dwell upon it, as would have been the case under other circumstances: excepting so far indeed as they found it needful for them, in the line of their ministry, to break up the false rest of

^a *Romans and James ii.* ^b *Acts xv. 9; Gal. v. 6.* ^c *Jam. ii.*
^a *Heb. xi.* ^b *1 John v. 10, 19.*

their opponents, who to a degree bordering on superstition, insisted on the outward history and ordinances, socalled, and on which they were in danger of laying an almost exclusive stress.^a It was the work, therefore, of our fellow believers to throw their weight into the other scale, which they were constrained to do,—and, in doing so, were well supported by Scripture authority. They adduced, in a very ample manner, not only the prophetic word, spoken in anticipation of the “last times,” in support of their views, but they were abundantly confirmed in them by the words of Christ himself, and of his inspired apostles; neither did they fall short of appealing to the testimony of the Spirit itself, in the hearts of the living members of Christ’s church.

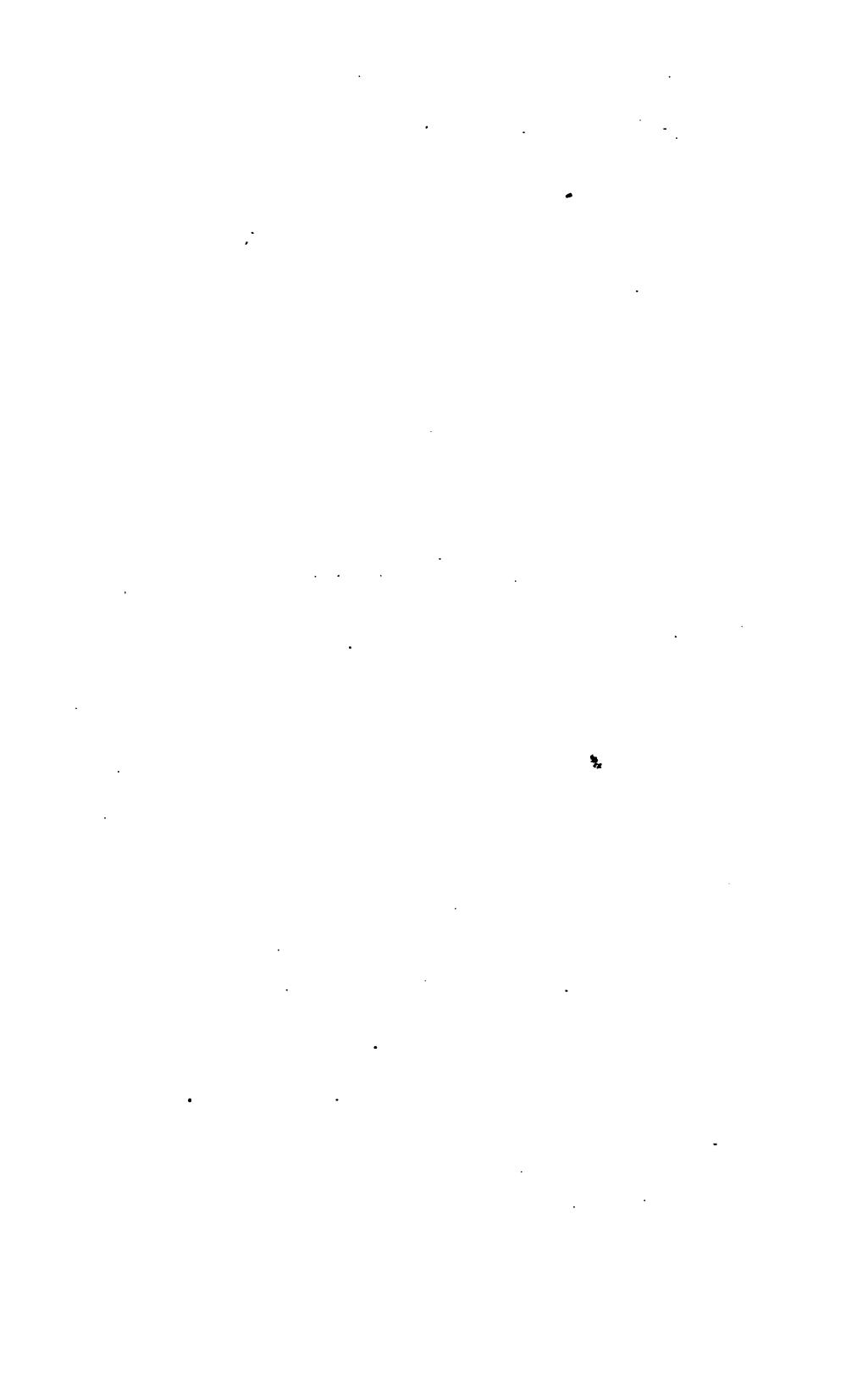
Thus arose the testimonies, not needful here to be enumerated, which George Fox and his contemporaries in profession believed were given to them to bear, by Him “who is Head over all things to the church.”^b And it may be some considerable confirmation to us of the soundness of their views, to observe the degree in which the principles involved by those testimonies have gained ground, among nearly all classes of Christian professors. But let not this acknowledged fact lead us to suppose that our work is done, that the object is attained for which we became a peculiar people; and that, therefore, religious scruples are things now much out of date. It was sealed on the minds of many of the foremost amongst us, that Friends were a people raised up to hold forth the Christian religion to other churches, both in faith and practice, in its original purity. The present is our day; “other men laboured, and we are entered into their labours;” therefore we have the experience of those who have gone before us for our encouragement, and also “a manifestation of the same Spirit” by which they walked, “to profit withal.”^c May we, then, “be watchful,” and seek by every righteous means, to “strengthen the things that remain,” which seem “ready to die.”^d

EDWARD SMITH.

London, 3rd Month, 1833.

^a See Penn’s Select Works, p. 799, Ed. 1771.

^b Eph. i. 22. ^c 1 Cor. xii. 7. ^d Rev. iii. 2.





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